

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Objection To The Drawings

In the office action dated 11/3/00, the Draftsperson objected to the drawings. The Applicants have submitted proposed redrafted figures that cure the cited defects of the original drawings. The proposed redrafted figures do not contain any new matter. The Applicants respectfully request approval of the proposed redrafted figures.

Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

In the office action dated 11/3/00, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 4 to 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). The Examiner stated that the claimed invention was anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,862,325 issued to Reed, et al. (hereinafter referred to as the Reed reference). The Applicants respectfully traverse.

The Reed reference discloses a computer-based communication system and method of using metadata defining a control structure. The system of the Reed reference discloses a complex system for managing a communication relationship between a provider and a consumer using metadata and methods.

The present invention discloses methods for automating the handling of mass amounts of incoming email. In an embodiment claimed in claim 1 of the present application, the system receives incoming email, categorizes that incoming email using a category database, and then creates a proposed response using information from that category database and defines a set of recipients for the proposed response using information from that category database. The complex communication system of the Reed reference does not anticipate such a system.

The examiner contends that col. 6, lines 49 to 67 discloses "receiving a message in an enterprise mail system, said message from a message sender." Column 6, lines 49 to 67, state:

Another approach to automating communications and data transfers is shared replicated database systems such as Lotus Notes and Collabra Share. With these systems, information to be communicated is entered via a client program into one or more databases which may reside locally on client computers or on network server computers. These databases are then replicated to other server computers or local client computers throughout the system so that the data can be easily accessed by any other user of the system who needs the information and has the proper access privileges. Access privileges are controlled by one or more system administrators via the system servers. Some of these systems, notably Collabra Share, also allow users to "subscribe" to specific databases. **These users can receive an e-mail notification from a database agent monitoring the database when a new entry or a certain condition has been made in that database.** These systems may also employ electronic forms and forms processing languages to structure the data being entered into a database, and to take programmable actions based on the data entered. The architecture of these systems is designed for groups of users to share information related to specific topics, and to automate the transfer of data between different computer applications used by an organization. For this reason the core data structure of the architecture is a subject database or "forum". Each subject database covers a number of related interest topics under which all entries in the database are categorized. All copies of any subject database are synchronized throughout the system when data in any one copy has been changed.

The only sentence referring to email refers to a “database agent” that is not a human sender as set forth in the amended claim 1. Furthermore, that sentence refers to “users” that receive email, not receiving a “message into an enterprise mail system” as claimed by claim 1 and 4 of the present invention.

The independent claims of the present invention further require assigning a “category from a category database” to incoming messages. The examiner cited several sections from the Reed reference that allegedly teach such categorization. The Applicants respectfully traverse. For example, the examiner cited column 5, lines 41 to 50 which state:

Specialized e-mail systems have been developed that combine the use of electronic forms with a system-wide data processing model.

Examples are The Coordinator from Action Technologies, Inc., or OVAL from the MIT Center for Coordination Science. These systems allow providers and consumers to share a frame of reference for messaging such that messages can be classified into specific categories and actions. This allows message providers and consumers to automate the routing, storage, and processing of messages based on these category and actions.

That section refers to using “electronic forms” in messages to aid in categorization. The present invention does not use any forms for categorization. Furthermore, the cited section does not refer to any categorization database as claimed by the present invention. The Examiner also referred to text in columns 17 and 18 that disclose information about specific “types” of communication objects. However, defining a low level “primitive type” for a communication object is not the same as categorizing an incoming message. Each incoming message is already of a known primitive type (text). The categorization is a higher level of organization.

The category database is an important feature of the present invention. As claimed in independent claims 1 and 4, the category database of the present invention has category entries “containing information for handling particular incoming messages.” By assigning a category entry that contains information for handling a message to each incoming message, that incoming message can be handled more efficiently. Specifically, as set forth in independent claims 1 and 4, a proposed response message can be automatically generated. Furthermore, a set of recipients for that response message can be assigned as set forth in independent claim 1.

Since the Reed reference fails to teach “receiving a message in an enterprise mail system” from a human sender nor does it assign a category entry from a category database wherein the category entry contains information for handling the incoming message, the Reed reference does not anticipate the present invention as claimed in amended independent claims 1 and 4. The claims dependent up independent claims 1 and 4 contain all the limitations of independent claims 1 and 4 and are thus likewise allowable.

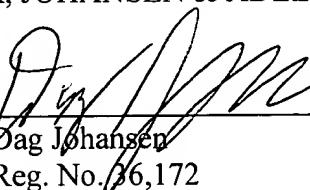
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections and objections is requested. Allowance is earnestly solicited at the earliest possible date.

Respectfully submitted,

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The Amended Paragraphs for Replacement in the Specification

The following amended paragraph replaces the second full paragraph on page 19 of the specification:

--Messages that handled by the forward and track action are forwarded to a user that does not use the enterprise mail system (outside user). However, when the message is forwarded, the reply address is set [sent] to a special address that will cause any reply to be sent back to the enterprise email system **100**. Before the message is forwarded to the outside user, the enterprise mail system sets a timer. If no response message is received before the timer expires then the message is returned to the mailbox of the enterprise email system user who initiated the Forward and Track.

The following amended paragraph replaces the fourth full paragraph on page 19 of the specification:

Messages that are handled by the Collaborate action are forwarded to a user who does not use the enterprise mail system. The enterprise email system sets a timer for the message is forwarded to the outside user. Furthermore, when the message is forwarded, the reply address is set [sent] to a special address that will cause any reply to be sent back to the enterprise email system **100**. If no response is received from the outside user before the timer expires, then the message is returned to the mailbox of the enterprise mail user that initiated the collaborate action.

The Amended Claims

The following pages provide the amended claims with the amendments marked with deleted material in [brackets] and new material underlined.

- 1 1. **(Amended)** A method for processing electronic messages, said method
- 2 comprising:
 - 3 receiving a message in an enterprise mail system, said message from a human
 - 4 message sender;
 - 5 categorizing said message by selecting a first category entry from a category
 - 6 database, said category entry containing information for handling particular
 - 7 incoming messages; and
 - 8 creating a response message using said first category entry, said response message
 - 9 including a response body defined in said first category entry and a set of
 - 10 recipients defined in said first category entry.
- 1 2. **(Amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein one of said recipients [recipient]
- 2 comprises a carbon copy recipient.
- 1 3. **(Amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein one of said recipients [recipient]
- 2 comprises a blind carbon copy recipient.

1 4. **(Amended)** A method for processing electronic messages, said method
2 comprising:
3 receiving a first message into an enterprise mail system, said first message from a
4 first human message sender;
5 storing said first message in a message database;
6 assigning a category entry from a category database to said first message, said
7 category entry containing information for handling particular incoming
8 messages; [and]
9 delivering said first message to a first enterprise mail system user; and [, said

10 enterprise mail system user creating]
11 providing a template response message to said first enterprise mail system user
12 using information in [with] said category entry.

1 5. **(Amended)** The method of claim 4 wherein assigning a category entry from a
2 category database to said first message is performed by a rule processor.

1 6. **(Amended)** The method of claim 4 wherein assigning a category entry from a
2 category database to said first message is performed by said enterprise mail system user.

1 7. **(Amended)** The method of claim 4 whering providing a template response
2 message further comprises [comprising]:
3 providing a set of default message body sections for said template response
4 message.